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President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 16

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/326)

Draft resolution (A/61/L.25)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.25.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): I have the honour today to introduce the General Assembly's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan. On this occasion, let me share a few thoughts with all of you.

One year ago, the United Nations looked forward to the formation of a freely elected Parliament of Afghanistan in December 2005. This step marked the successful completion of the Bonn process. This process has focused on institutional transition. Much was achieved since the Bonn Agreement of 2001. Within four years, Afghanistan has given itself a modern constitution and, after free presidential and parliamentary elections, formed a competent Government. The United Nations played a key role in helping to organize the transition.

Today, the United Nations continues to play a key and legitimate role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan within the framework of the Afghanistan Compact.

We commend the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) under Tom Koenigs' excellent leadership for its outstanding work under sometimes difficult conditions. Germany welcomes the expansion of UNAMA's presence throughout the country, security conditions permitting.

We appreciate that the Security Council recently visited Afghanistan to gain first-hand information.

After the successful process of institutional transition, the Afghanistan Compact redefined our shared vision for all sectors of Afghanistan's reconstruction until 2010.

The Compact reflects the renewed commitment of the international community in an Afghanistan that is now reassuming ownership of its future. And it also reflects an integrated approach to the four main sectors — security, governance, development and combating the narcotics industry.

But the Compact is more than a broad political vision. It is a precise road map for Afghanistan and the international community with benchmarks and timelines.

In the past months we have been confronted with a number of challenges, especially in some provinces, namely, insecurity, a thriving drug industry and the lack of good governance. All these are threatening the achievements of the past years.

As the Secretary General states in his latest report,

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> "[t]he recent upsurge of violence represents a watershed. At no time since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001 has the threat to Afghanistan's transition been so severe" (*A/61/326, para. 4*).

About 4,000 Afghans were killed in the course of this year alone. The security situation in Afghanistan, especially, but not only, in the southern provinces, is serious. The United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) is confronted in the south with a new quality of insurgency and in the east with Taliban, Al Qaida and other extremist groups.

Opium production is at its highest level ever with an increase of almost 50 per cent in 2006. The southern province of Helmand has become the largest opium producer in the world. The drug industry in Afghanistan involves more than 2 million people and generates resources amounting to approximately $3 billion. This drug money fuels, to a large extent, insurgency and corruption throughout Afghanistan.

Lack of good governance and corruption are another key problem we are facing today. If the Afghan man and woman in the street cannot realize tangible progress in all parts of the country, we shall face the risk of losing support for our joint efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. More emphasis on the fight against corruption is necessary. We also need to multiply our efforts to build capacity in the Afghan administration. Reform of public administration has to be prioritized.

The Afghanistan Compact provides us with an excellent strategic approach to these challenges. We need to implement the objectives we have agreed upon in a more consistent manner.

I have already addressed the key issues of governance and the drug industry. As to security sector reform, we have registered some progress, but no major success yet, in spite of all our efforts. In the absence of more effective State forces, the disarmament of illegal militias remains slow. The Afghan National Army has reached only half of its planned strength. Nevertheless, this army provides valuable contributions to fighting the insurgency. It is respected by the people of Afghanistan.

The Afghan National Police has been provided with a well-trained leadership. It still lacks qualified, motivated manpower in the lower ranks. Germany, as the key partner on police reform, will encourage more partners to engage in police training in order to accelerate progress throughout the country. We welcome that the European Union will become more involved in justice sector reform. Quick progress in terms of law enforcement is also urgently needed.

In terms of economic and social recovery, advances have been made, but progress remains uneven. Insecurity and corruption hamper development in several regions. However, we should not overlook the achievements — over 2,000 kilometres of roads have been repaired and tarred, many towns have been supplied with drinking water, the power supply has improved, about 80 per cent of the population now has access to health care, girls are returning to schools and women are reassuming functions in public life.

Many people in Afghanistan are now better off than five years ago and nobody is worse off than in 2001. We should recognize these achievements and work harder to achieve even more and prevent reversals in some regions.

Another key factor for stability and prosperity in Afghanistan is regional cooperation, in particular with Pakistan. We believe that both countries can only benefit from closer cooperation. We also welcome regional economic initiatives such as the second regional Economic Cooperation Conference, held recently in New Delhi.

In terms of implementation of the Afghanistan Compact, we should strengthen the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board as the key instrument for coordinating and monitoring the reconstruction process. The Board assembles all stakeholders and major partners, and is jointly co-chaired by the Government of Afghanistan and UNAMA.

The challenge is, as it was put recently during the third session of the Board, to move from Compact to impact. We do not see a need for new instruments. Germany envisages hosting a Board session at the political level in 2007 during its Group of Eight presidency.

As to Germany's continued role, we have been involved in the international efforts since late 2001, when we hosted the Petersberg Conference to agree on the political transition after the fall of the Taliban regime. Since then, Germany has been a major donor and the lead nation on police reform.

We also continue to provide one of the largest troop contingents to the International Security

Assistance Force (ISAF). At this stage, almost 3,000 men and women are serving in Afghanistan. With the expansion this year of ISAF operations throughout the country, Germany took over the command of the northern region in Mazari Sharif.

Members may have noticed that this year's draft resolution consists for the first time of one single text. We have overcome the habit of adopting two texts focusing on security and on humanitarian issues, which increasingly overlapped. Last year, moreover, many delegations also expressed the wish to adopt this format.

The draft resolution before the Assembly, while carrying more than 90 per cent of the consensus language of previous years, is now structured like the Afghanistan Compact. It includes security, governance, development and counter-narcotics. We believe that by adopting this draft resolution today the General Assembly will not only prove its ability to change its habits; the message will be that the Assembly endorses the Afghanistan Compact. The number of sponsors — well over 100 — emphasizes that message.

The overall prospects may be less optimistic than a year ago. We believe that we have recognized the challenges and that we have the means to meet them. The commitments made to the United Nations, NATO, the European Union and other organizations and institutions should be honoured by all of us.

We should not lose sight of the unparalleled achievements in Afghanistan since 2001, nor underestimate the risks of failure for this country, the region and the whole international community. Much more has to be done in the future. Together we remain committed to create a free, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan.

Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan): Every year the General Assembly convenes to consider the annual draft resolution entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security".

We express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report of 11 September 2006 on the situation in Afghanistan (A/61/326). It provides a comprehensive overview of the developments over the past six months.

In adopting the Afghanistan Compact in January 2006 in London, Afghanistan and the international community committed to a second phase of international engagement beyond the Bonn process. Today we continue our efforts towards achieving the goals set out in the Afghanistan Compact. However, despite our progress, we are mindful of the significant challenges that remain.

The recent increase in the number of terrorist attacks, particularly along the southern and south-eastern border of the country, represents the most significant threat to the stability and prosperity of Afghanistan. We remain concerned over the fact that those who seek to wreak havoc on and terrorize Afghan society continue to receive and rely on military, financial and logistical support from outside Afghanistan.

Indeed, without such support, terrorists would not be able to conduct well-planned attacks against nearly all segments of society on a consistent basis. We reiterate, therefore, the need for the international community to bring an end to foreign intervention in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Enhanced focus on addressing the external sources fuelling the increase in the level of terrorist activities will be instrumental in achieving this objective.

In that regard, allow me to refer briefly to paragraph 8 of the Secretary-General's report of 11 September 2006, in which he states,

> "The leadership relies heavily on cross-border fighters, many of whom are Afghans drawn from nearby refugee camps and radical seminaries in Pakistan ... They are trained and paid to serve as medium-level commanders, leading operations inside Afghanistan, and they are able to retreat back to safe havens outside the country."

As stated by President Karzai in September in his address to the General Assembly,

> "We must look beyond Afghanistan to the sources of terrorism. We must destroy terrorist sanctuaries beyond Afghanistan, dismantle the elaborate networks in the region that recruit, indoctrinate, train, finance, arm and deploy terrorists" (*A/61/PV.12, p. 2*).

Regional cooperation is vital to effectively combat international terrorism. We reiterate the importance of sincere and honest efforts by neighbouring countries to achieve our shared objectives. A more comprehensive and robust

campaign against international terrorism will not only benefit the cause of peace and stability in Afghanistan, but will also serve the interests of the region and beyond. We look forward to enhanced cooperation and coordination with our brotherly neighbour Pakistan within the framework of the Tripartite Commission.

On the basis of the proposal of President Karzai, we are in the process of preparing to convene a cross-border jirga, comprising influential tribal and religious figures from both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, with a view to assessing ways and means to eliminate the scourge of terrorism from Afghanistan and from the region. We consider that meeting an important initiative in fostering enhanced cooperation in the combat against terrorism.

Significant progress has been made towards the formation of a fully functional and capable national army and police. Despite the lack of resources available to our security institutions, both the national army and the police are engaged in challenging combat operations against remnants of the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups in the southern and south-eastern provinces of the country. However, both the army and the police continue to face significant challenges. Lack of modern equipment and logistical support and extensive delays in the payment of salaries of soldiers and police have had a drastic impact on the effectiveness of both institutions.

As my delegation indicated at the Security Council meeting of 26 July 2006, on the situation in Afghanistan, a significant improvement in the overall security situation will require additional support by the international community for our security institutions. We are pleased to note that this issue has been rightfully reflected in this year's draft resolution in the Assembly.

The recent conclusion of the third phase of the nationwide expansion of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has been an important step towards attaining security and stability in the country. The national army and police continue to conduct joint military operations alongside ISAF and coalition forces in the combat against terrorism. We welcome the recent inclusion of ISAF as a member of the Tripartite Commission.

Substantial progress in the social and economic development of the country will be vital to overall success in the country. The pace of reconstruction has not been parallel to the achievements that have taken place in other areas. Having presented our interim National Development Strategy earlier this year, we remain on track to present the full Afghanistan National Development Strategy by the end of 2008.

We stress the need for the sustained support of the international community for the implementation of the Compact and the interim National Development Strategy. In that regard, we highlight the need to channel donor assistance through the Afghan national budget, while stressing the leadership role of the Afghan Government in designating development priorities. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board continues to make progress in carrying out its important mandate and recently convened its third periodic meeting, on 12 November, where it reviewed the progress made on 11 benchmarks that are scheduled to be completed by the end of this year.

Enhanced regional economic cooperation is vital for the timely and effective implementation of the Compact and for the consolidation of peace and security in the country. We express utmost appreciation to the Government of India for having co-hosted with us, the second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which was convened in New Delhi on 18 and 19 November 2006. We were pleased to have witnessed broad participation by representatives of neighbouring countries and other international partners at the Conference. At the conclusion of the two-day meeting, participants reaffirmed the central importance of Afghanistan's development to the growth, stability and prosperity of the region.

The Government of Afghanistan attaches great importance to the fight against corruption and narcotics as key components of the Afghanistan Compact. The dangerous link between the production of narcotics and terrorism poses another threat to the stability and social development of Afghanistan. The updated Afghan National Drug Control Strategy, presented at the London Conference on Afghanistan, offers a multifaceted approach to curtail and eliminate that scourge.

We have taken a series of measures at the national level towards the implementation of our National Strategy. As noted in the report of the Secretary General, the specialized counter-narcotics unit of the Afghan National Police seized

approximately 66 tons of narcotics during the first half of 2006. Furthermore, the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics has enhanced its cooperation with the Counter-Narcotics Tribunal, the Counter-Narcotics Criminal Justice Task Force and other relevant agencies.

Despite our efforts, we continue to face significant challenges in our combat against narcotics. Additional support from the international community will be required for the implementation of our national drug control strategy. As emphasized on numerous occasions, particular focus should be accorded to the provision of alternative livelihoods to farmers as an essential element of a successful counter-narcotics strategy.

The fight against corruption remains a top priority of the Afghan Government. We have signed the United Nations Convention against Corruption and remain completely committed to its ratification by the end of 2006. National legislation will be enacted to facilitate the implementation of the Convention by the end of 2007. In that regard, a mechanism will be established with a mandate to monitor and evaluate the process.

Pursuant to the instructions of President Karzai, the Government has embarked upon a comprehensive initiative aimed at enhancing transparency and good governance in various Government institutions. As part of this initiative, the Government has established an anti-corruption committee, headed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and composed of numerous agencies, to come up with additional recommendations for further action by the President.

Before concluding, we would like to welcome the recent visit of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan, which took place from 9 to 17 November. The visit was seen as a reaffirmation of the international community's unwavering support for Afghanistan. Once again, Afghanistan reaffirms its solemn commitment to overcome the remaining challenges to achieving the provisions of the Afghanistan Compact and the Millennium Development Goals with the support of our international partners.

In conclusion, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to Ambassador Thomas Matussek and the German delegation for their hard and fruitful work in leading the informal consultations on the draft resolution before us. Special thanks also go to Ms. Beate Maeder-Metcalf and Ms. Marlies Stecher for their personal efforts in this regard. We also extend our deep appreciation to the more than 105 Member States that sponsored this year's draft resolution A/61/L.25, so eloquently introduced by the Ambassador of Germany, which I hope will be adopted, like similar texts in previous years, by consensus.

Mrs. Schroderus-Fox (Finland): I am speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU). The following countries align themselves with this statement: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, as well as Ukraine and Moldova.

The European Union very much welcomes the opportunity for the General Assembly to take stock of the developments in Afghanistan and supports the draft resolution (A/61/L.25) under consideration. We commend the German delegation for its work on the draft resolution. All EU member States are sponsors of the draft resolution.

This year we are adopting a single draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan, unlike in previous years. This step reflects developments both in Afghanistan and in the evolving partnership between the international community and Afghanistan, which are redefined and endorsed in the Afghanistan Compact of January 2006.

Like the Compact, the draft resolution builds on a comprehensive and integrated approach by outlining a broad range of issues relevant to Afghanistan and to the international community. Indeed, this holistic approach on Afghanistan is very much needed. In promoting development, we, as donors, sometimes look too much at the various development sectors, indicators, trust funds and programmes. It is vital to look at Afghanistan as a whole and pay attention to the most critical aspects on the way to a more secure and prosperous future for the country and its people. At the same time, we must always check our expectations and remember that nation-building is a long and difficult process. There are no shortcuts.

The past year has heralded significant political progress in Afghanistan. The draft resolution before us pays tribute to it. Significantly, the new parliament has started its work actively and with a reformist agenda in, among other things, approving the Supreme Court and the cabinet. The building of functional, transparent

and accountable Afghan institutions, both at the central level and in the provinces, is the most urgent task at hand.

Yet the challenges remain daunting. The latest report of the Secretary-General (A/61/326) paints a grim picture of the deteriorating security situation, particularly in some parts of Afghanistan. The extent and reach of violence caused by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups, the sophistication of their weaponry and the increasing brutality of their tactics threaten to undermine our achievements.

Popular frustration in Afghanistan is simmering due to the lack of security and development, especially in the southern and eastern regions of the country. Challenges in governance and human rights, anti-corruption and counter-narcotic efforts and infrastructure development remain formidable. The slow advancement of the process of the disbandment of illegal armed groups undermines development in other sectors, particularly the dismantling of the drug economy.

In facing these manifold challenges, Afghanistan is not alone. There is a strong commitment by the international community to the development of Afghanistan, embodied in the Afghanistan Compact. This continued commitment to an Afghan-led process of stabilization and reconstruction has most recently been expressed by a visit of a Security Council mission to Afghanistan.

The United Nations, mainly through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), continues to have a key role in the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. UNAMA co-chairs, together with the Government of Afghanistan, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. UNAMA's role in finding political and regional solutions to the challenges facing Afghanistan is highly appreciated by the European Union, and we would like to support an even stronger role by UNAMA in this regard. We also welcome plans to expand UNAMA's presence throughout the field, security permitting.

Regional partners of Afghanistan have a special role and responsibility, as is also recognized in the draft resolution. In this respect we welcome the intent by Presidents Karzai and Musharraf to improve bilateral collaboration against the insurgents, as well as the plans to hold two large tribal jirgas, one on each side of the Afghan-Pakistan border.

The European Union and Afghanistan adopted a Joint Political Declaration on 16 November 2005, in which the EU affirmed its commitment to long-term support of the Government and people of Afghanistan through Afghan-led reconstruction efforts. Afghan leadership and responsibility will be of key importance in this process. EU assistance will mainly aim at fostering the establishment of a democratic, accountable, sustainable and self-sufficient Afghan State, capable of exercising its sovereignty and protecting the rights of its citizens. The European Union attaches special importance to the protection of the rights of women and children. Human rights remain our cross-cutting priority.

From the outset of the reconstruction process, we have been actively supporting counter-narcotics efforts. Earlier this year the EU adopted an action-oriented plan to combat the production of drugs in Afghanistan and trafficking from Afghanistan along heroin routes. The EU and its member States believe that the National Drug Control Strategy represents an appropriate approach for tackling the problem at the current time, under the ownership and primary responsibility of the Afghan Government. In this context, the European Union believes that anti-corruption policies are essential components of counter-narcotics efforts. The EU, however, recognizes that the Afghan Government does not have the means to deliver on its objectives alone and that it will need the sustained support of the international community for many years to come.

The European Union places particular importance on the rule of law, and we are currently considering ways to increase our engagement in that sector. A European Union assessment mission on the rule of law and governance, including police, has recently returned from Afghanistan, and its findings will be important in planning priorities for future engagement.

For its own part, the EU has collectively disbursed one third of all development assistance to Afghanistan during the period 2002-2006. The EU aims to increase its counter-narcotics assistance to Afghanistan in line with the relevant actions foreseen in the EU drugs action plan 2005-2008. The EU has pledged over €250 million starting in 2005, along with additional trainers, mentors and other personnel to support the development of Afghan capacity in the

fight against drugs. With about half of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) coming from European Union member States, the EU is strongly committed to improving the security of Afghanistan in close coordination with NATO.

The EU continues to support the Afghanistan Compact and considers it the principal framework for the future reconstruction and stabilization of Afghanistan in a more coordinated fashion until 2010. We support the continued central role of the United Nations in the implementation of the Compact, in supporting and encouraging the Afghan Government as well as in the monitoring and coordination of donor activity by the international community. A stronger role for UNAMA is the key to improving coordination of activities in the fields of governance, rule of law, reconstruction and development, as well as in coordinating international assistance. The EU will coordinate closely its actions and programmes with the United Nations, its agencies and other relevant international organizations.

To conclude, let me stress that the European Union remains committed to the long-term reconstruction of Afghanistan. We continue to work in close collaboration with the Afghan Government and our international partners to build an Afghanistan whose prosperity and stability match the hopes, the strength and the fortitude of its people.

Mr. Jeenbaev (Kyrgyzstan) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the States members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO): the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

These States maintain friendly relations with their close neighbour, Afghanistan. The situation in Afghanistan has a substantial impact on stability and security in a region where the SCO is increasingly active. The members of our organization are closely following the peace settlement and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan and are satisfied that some progress can be observed. In political terms Afghanistan has adopted a new constitution, held presidential and parliamentary elections and re-established the institutions of public authority and governance, laying the foundation for the continued development of the country. In the economic area, the Afghan leadership has demonstrated its commitment to post-war rehabilitation, relying on international assistance and its own resources. The SCO welcomes the aspirations of the people and the Government of Afghanistan to the earliest possible peaceful revival of the nation.

However, Afghanistan continues to face a considerable number of dangerous threats and challenges. We are gravely concerned at the degradation of the security situation due to increasing violence throughout the country. The violence and scale of recent terrorist attacks testify to the fragility of the political situation in Afghanistan. Recently, militant armed formations of the Taliban and Al-Qaida have increased their confrontations with the Government and the international presence thus undermining international community efforts towards post-conflict settlement and the economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan. We are particularly concerned about the fact that in a number of provinces the Taliban has already begun to establish parallel bodies of government and justice.

The increasing threat from intransigent extremists makes it particularly urgent to ensure strict compliance, including by the Government of Afghanistan, with the sanctions regime introduced by the Security Council. We agree that it is important to implement the national reconciliation programme with a view to the long-term stabilization of the situation in the country. However, that process should not work against the Security Council's decisions and the objective of the total elimination of the terrorist threat existing within the territory of the country.

We are seriously concerned at the fact that a number of individuals on the sanctions list of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to Council resolution 1267 (1999) have been included in Government bodies of Afghanistan, and at the attempts to exclude from that list former high-ranking Taliban activists who are associated with serious crimes. The overall unstable situation has also been aggravated by the persistently acute narcotic threat that affects both the fight against terrorism and the reform of the Government.

Unfortunately, the efforts of the international community and the Afghan authorities to counter drug production and trafficking have not had the desired effect. An important condition to achieve substantial

progress in that direction is eradication of the bases and sources of drug production in Afghanistan. We are concerned by the forecasts of United Nations experts who envisage substantially larger poppy crops in Afghanistan this year compared to last. It is becoming extremely urgent to implement comprehensive measures to counter the drug traffic from Afghanistan, including the creation of anti-drug security belts along the Afghan border and the reinforcement of existing ones.

We are satisfied with the outcome of the Paris 2 — Moscow 1 international conference on countering Afghan drug traffic, held in Moscow on 26-28 June 2006. It made a tangible contribution to strengthening the Paris process and to establishing a coalition of States to fight the transborder narcotic threat from Afghanistan. It is essential to translate the Conference decisions into concrete action as soon as possible.

The SCO pursues a policy of intensifying its multidimensional cooperation with Afghanistan and has established a contact group to strengthen SCO cooperation with that country. Our priority remains to strengthen all facets of our interaction in combating terrorism, separatism, extremism and illicit drug trafficking. The SCO member States are directly affected by these acute challenges; we possess the political will and the capacity to counter them.

Our organization is also open to deepening our anti-drug partnership with non-regional players.

The achievement of lasting peace, security and economic progress in Afghanistan is in the interests of the people of Afghanistan, the other States of the region and the entire international community. Without long-term assistance and support from the outside, Afghanistan will be incapable of resolving its large-scale problems. The United Nations must preserve its leading role in coordinating international efforts for post-conflict settlement and rehabilitation in Afghanistan, including at the post-Bonn stage.

Members of the SCO have provided useful help to Afghanistan. For example, last January, China pledged to provide 80 million yuan in grants to Afghanistan, in addition to its previous pledge of $150 million, which is being fulfilled. From 2002 to 2005, Russia provided $200 million in grants for the development of national defence capacity. This year, the Russian Federation, in the context of the Paris Club, agreed to the cancellation of Afghanistan's debt of $11.2 billion. The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have been helping in the construction of energy infrastructure, roads and tunnels, irrigation systems and public health care; providing assistance in materials; and training diplomats, economic management officials and police. The members of SCO will continue to provide extensive assistance to the Afghan people through various channels.

The stabilization of Afghanistan will contribute to accelerating the integration process in the region and provide the SCO with the opportunity fully to utilize its potential in assisting the social and economic rehabilitation of Afghanistan's Government.

We hope that the international community and the Government of Afghanistan will succeed in their joint efforts to implement the Afghanistan reconstruction programme formulated in the London Compact and endorsed by the G-8 summit in Saint Petersburg. To that end, it will be necessary to ensure within the established time frame the solution of key issues in the spheres of security, governance, human rights and the fight against the drug threat. It is our understanding that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan will organize the strict monitoring and coordination of the proper implementation of the Compact. The involvement of all sectors of society and political, ethnic and religious groups in establishing sovereign and effective statehood in Afghanistan is an integral part of ensuring long-term stabilization in that country. We support the General Assembly's draft resolution on Afghanistan, prepared by a large group of sponsors. We hope that its adoption by consensus will contribute to enhancing the agreed efforts of the international community in Afghanistan.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the States members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) — Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

We support the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security, as well as the draft resolution on Afghanistan. We thank Germany for coordinating the revision of the draft resolution.

We note that some progress has been achieved in the political formation process in Afghanistan. The new Constitution has been adopted and presidential and parliamentary elections have been held. Those tasks were completed largely thanks to the significant and multifaceted support of the United Nations. It is important to maintain the coordinating role of the United Nations during the post-Bonn period.

At the same time, the CSTO member States are concerned about the new outbreak of violence and terror provoked by the Taliban and Al-Qaida. The deterioration of the security situation not only slows the pace of reconstruction in Afghanistan, but also jeopardizes the results achieved in the political, social and economic fields. The considerable rise in the number of casualties in the course of military operations, compared to last year, is deeply regrettable. In that regard, it is important to ensure the comprehensive implementation of the sanctions regime imposed by the Security Council.

The creation of stable Afghan statehood is a key factor of the long-term stabilization of the country. The stability of the State system in Afghanistan is a basis for the normalization of the security situation, as well as for the successful conduct of social and economic reforms and the implementation of the international rehabilitation programme approved by the United Nations.

The CSTO member States are interested in peace, stability and economic prosperity in Afghanistan. Two of the seven CSTO member States — Tajikistan and Uzbekistan — are Afghanistan's northern neighbours. Twenty five per cent of Afghanistan's frontier lies on the southern borders of CSTO countries.

CSTO activities seek to provide security in the zone of its responsibility. In order to defend the collective and national interests of its member States, CSTO is enhancing its potential for countering such global challenges and threats as international terrorism, extremism and the illegal circulation of narcotics.

Therefore, Afghanistan's orientation remains one of the priorities of CSTO activities. CSTO is ready to contribute to solving the security problems both by mitigating their consequences and by addressing their root causes. We believe that the establishment of multifacted regional cooperation is an important factor of promoting a settlement in Afghanistan. Such regional cooperation may include cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries on a wide range of security issues and economic projects, and in countering the drug threat. A special working group on Afghanistan was created within the Council of Foreign Ministers of CSTO to establish such cooperation.

CSTO is concerned by the rise in drug production in Afghanistan. Drug trafficking from Afghanistan poses a serious threat to regional and global security. CSTO assumes with due responsibility the challenges raised by the geographical location of its member States. We consider our mission to be one of stemming the flow of drugs by all possible means, in close cooperation with the members of the anti-narcotics coalition. The problem of international crime in the modern environment can be effectively addressed only by the joint efforts of the law-enforcement agencies of different countries.

The most recent example of the practical anti-drug-trafficking activity of CSTO member States was the successful implementation of the international preventive operation known as Channel 2006. Operation Channel has been implemented regularly since 2003 by the law-enforcement agencies of CSTO member States. A coordination board of agency heads was created in 2004. The efficiency of the collective anti-narcotic efforts within CSTO is growing annually.

The goal of the operation is to stem drug flows from Afghanistan into the territories of the States participating in the operation, as well as to expose and suppress the smuggling of heroin production components to the Central Asian States and Afghanistan. The October 2006 operation resulted in the removal from illegal circulation of approximately five tons of drugs. Moreover, 500 firearms and more than 28,000 rounds of ammunition were confiscated.

The international community should step up its efforts to provide comprehensive assistance to the Government of Afghanistan to eliminate the root causes hindering the stabilization and post-conflict rehabilitation of the country. CSTO member States possess the necessary knowledge and experience, as well as economic and technological potential that can be effectively exploited in that respect. In particular, we feel that CSTO can play an indispensable role in the realization of projects in the framework of the Afghanistan Compact. We are also ready to provide a wide range of inexpensive, high-quality products necessary for the successful realization of projects,

including by filling future orders placed with CSTO member States by donors or international organizations.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that the Collective Security Treaty Organization performs a responsible role in providing security in the region. The geographical location of CSTO member States — in immediate proximity to Afghanistan on the one hand and to Europe on the other — makes clear the organization's role as an important factor for stability in the region.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan are vital — most of all for the long-suffering people of that unique country, but also for Pakistan and, indeed, for the international community.

Two years ago, prospects for success in Afghanistan appeared to be bright. Indeed, much had been achieved: the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections, the adoption of the Constitution and other benchmarks of the Bonn process, revived economic activity, the rise of trade and the return of many refugees. Today, however, perceptions of Afghanistan's prospects are considerably gloomier.

The Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan, issued in September, analyses the various facets of the current situation in Afghanistan. We agree with most of the analyses and assessments.

Today, as in the past 26 years of Afghanistan's history, the central issue is peace and security. There is good reason to be concerned about the growing violence across the country, especially the revived insurgency in the south and south-east of Afghanistan and its possible extension to other parts of the country.

There are multiple and interlinked causes of the growing insecurity and insurgency in Afghanistan: the absence of good governance and pervasive corruption, fed in part by the drug economy; the political alienation in large parts of the country, especially in the Pashtun majority provinces; the rise of the drug economy and associated criminal gangs, often posing as Taliban insurgents; the resurgence of the Taliban, especially in the south and south-east; the failure to deliver economic and social development, again especially in the south and south-east; and the negative fallout of indiscriminate military and air operations and collateral civilian casualties.

It is essential to focus on addressing each of these causes of the deteriorating environment in Afghanistan through a clear and comprehensive strategy.

Pakistan has a vital and strategic interest in ensuring peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan. Indeed, the destinies of our two nations are inextricably interlinked. Insecurity in Afghanistan causes insecurity in our Western frontier regions. Insecurity in Afghanistan obstructs our objective of creating trade and energy links with Central Asia and beyond. Pakistan has spared no effort, and will spare no effort, to contribute to stability and peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has committed $250 million to assist Afghanistan's development. So far $110 million has been spent. Our bilateral trade has grown exponentially, to more than $1.4 billion last year, and is rising. Over 60,000 Pakistanis are employed in the implementation of various development projects in Afghanistan. Afghans are enrolled in various training institutions in Pakistan. Our leaders exchange visits frequently. As brothers, we often talk frankly and openly to each other, and I will do so today.

There are, of course, certain circles and some countries in our region that do not desire to see the creation of the close friendship and cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan that geography, history, faith and ethnicity dictate. For them, and for some others, it is convenient to externalize the causes of Afghanistan's current problems, especially the resurgence of the Taliban. Let me emphasize that the problems are within Afghanistan. The Taliban is an Afghan phenomenon. The Government of Afghanistan should accept its responsibility rather than transfer blame onto Pakistan or others.

The Secretary-General's report rightly notes in paragraph 5 that the insurgency is being conducted by "Afghans operating inside Afghanistan's borders." In paragraph 6, it identifies five "distinct leadership centres" of the insurgency, all located within Afghanistan. According to paragraph 9, the "foot soldiers of the insurgency are Afghans recruited within Afghanistan".

There are, of course, some elements of the Taliban and their sympathizers who crossed over into

Pakistan following the post-9/11 military intervention by the United States and coalition forces in Afghanistan and melded with the 3 million Afghan refugees who had been in Pakistan for the past 25 years.

Pakistan has made every effort to prevent cross-border movement by Taliban militants and by other terrorists across the mountainous 1,800-mile border. We have conducted more than 80 operations against known locations of terrorists and militants. We have lost over 600 personnel in those operations. Pakistan has deployed more than 80,000 troops in our frontier regions and along our border. We coordinate operations with the coalition and Afghan forces on a continuous basis, including through the Tripartite Commission. We have proposed to fence and mine selective sections of the border to prevent cross-border movement. We have long requested equipment and technical capabilities to enhance our capacity for surveillance, detection and interdiction. We trust that these will be finally provided to us.

We therefore resent assertions that question our sincerity or intentions. Preventing the cross-border movement of terrorists or Taliban militants is a joint responsibility shared by Afghanistan, Pakistan and the coalition forces. While we have deployed 80,000 troops on the border, there is no matching deployment on the other side. Pakistan has 97 army posts on the border, as compared to three NATO and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) posts and 21 Afghan army posts, lightly manned and of dubious capacity. Pakistan therefore cannot accept the onus of controlling that long and difficult border. The coalition forces and the Afghans should assume an equal responsibility.

Similarly, loose talk about "sanctuaries" ignores the reality that there are vast tracts of territory in Afghanistan which are outside Government or coalition control and serve as sanctuaries for the insurgency. Their elimination should be a priority for the Government of Afghanistan and the Coalition forces, instead of seeking to excuse their incapacity by pointing fingers across the border.

There are certainly Taliban militants and sympathizers among the 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan. We have proposed that the refugee camps close to the border be relocated within Afghanistan's territory. We urge the Government of Afghanistan to accept that proposal and to cooperate in implementing it.

We also plan to repatriate all the Afghan refugees over the next three years. That should obviate the problem of cross-border movement and allegations about sanctuaries and *shuras*.

The lessons of history, especially Afghan history, dictate that military force cannot offer the answer to the problems of alienation and insurgency. A comprehensive strategy comprising military, political and economic elements can be more successful. That will require a painstaking process of reconciliation and reconstruction, especially in the regions afflicted by the insurgency and violence. Reconciliation will involve opening the doors to those who feel that they have been excluded from political participation, power and progress. Tribal leaders and other traditional sources of influence should be incorporated into the reconciliation and reconstruction process. The aim should be to strengthen the peacemakers and to neutralize the troublemakers.

A cessation of hostilities in each region would enable the implementation of programmes for reconstruction and development, especially in the South and South-East of Afghanistan, where there has been virtually no development activity so far. President Musharraf has proposed the implementation of a $4-5 billion "Marshall Plan" for the region. That is a fraction of the cost of current military operations. Infrastructure development, job creation and the provision of services will help to end the attraction of opposition and insurgency. Development is also indispensable to addressing the problems encountered in eliminating poppy cultivation and the drug economy that is feeding both corruption and the insurgency.

Pakistan has pursued the approach of reconciliation and reconstruction in the agreement concluded with tribal leaders in our North Waziristan Agency. It has led to a decline in violence and militancy. There is no basis for assertions that it has increased violent incidents in Afghanistan. On the contrary, NATO statistics show that violent incidents have since declined.

We intend to convene tribal jirgas in other parts of our frontier regions to conclude similar peace and development agreements. We believe that such agreements could be replicated on the Afghan side, especially in the South and South-East, to strengthen

the tribal and traditional leadership structures, end political alienation, cease hostilities and promote reconstruction and development. Such an agreement, we have noted, was also concluded by United Kingdom forces in Musa Qala, in Afghanistan. We are glad that this approach was endorsed at the summit meeting between Presidents Musharraf, Karzai and Bush in Washington, D.C., last September.

Five years after the military intervention by the Coalition in Afghanistan, it is time to review the situation comprehensively and objectively. We are not pursuing a war of vengeance in Afghanistan. The international community's aim in Afghanistan is to restore peace, stability and progress to a State that has been ravaged by almost three decades of conflict. We must seek success in Afghanistan through reconciliation and reconstruction, not by bombs and bullets.

Mr. Hannesson (Iceland): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his latest report on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security. Iceland is pleased to be a traditional co-sponsor of the draft resolution on Afghanistan. We thank Germany for preparing and facilitating the drafting of the resolution.

On the 19th of this month, Afghanistan, Sweden and Iceland celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of their entry in 1946 into the United Nations as the first three new Members after the founding of the Organization. We are mindful of that close and historical link, although the geographic distance between us is great.

Five years have now passed since the toppling of the Taliban regime, which ruled by tyranny and oppression and allowed Afghanistan to be used as a base for the export of terrorism. Since then, the international community has assisted the Afghan people in tackling the challenges facing the nation. Significant progress has been made towards building a democratic State in Afghanistan and towards the rehabilitation of the basic infrastructure of the country. The National Assembly has been operating effectively and provincial councils are now functioning in all 34 of Afghanistan's provinces.

However, as we have been hearing, serious challenges remain in Afghanistan, some of them critical. The upsurge of violence is a fundamental threat to the stability of the country. It also has grave implications for the human rights situation. The increase in poppy cultivation is very alarming and constitutes a growing threat to national security, social stability and governmental effectiveness.

Similarly, the Secretary-General identifies corruption as a threat to Afghanistan's transition. Indeed, corruption is among the greatest obstacles to economic and social development. It undermines development by distorting the rule of law and weakening the institutional foundation on which economic growth depends. Iceland therefore would like to echo the encouragement to the Government of Afghanistan in the draft resolution before us to

> "vigorously pursue its efforts to establish a more effective, accountable and transparent administration at all levels of Government leading the fight against corruption in accordance with the Afghanistan Compact" (*A/61/L.25, para. 26*).

We recognize the interconnected nature of those challenges and that sustainable progress is mutually reinforcing. In that context, we stress the important role that neighbouring countries can play in tackling many of the difficult issues that the Afghans face, as my colleague from Pakistan, among others, just stated.

On the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), I would like to align Iceland with the statement made by our colleague from Finland a few minutes ago on the even stronger role to be played by UNAMA in finding political and regional solutions to the challenges facing Afghanistan. In addition, I would like to echo my German colleague's statement earlier this morning that we should neither overestimate what has been achieved, nor underestimate the serious challenges ahead in Afghanistan.

Secure aviation and transport by air is essential for the International Security Assistance Force and for pilgrimage flights made by the Afghan people, as well as for humanitarian aid and reconstruction work in the area. Iceland has supported the reconstruction work in the aviation sector in Afghanistan both by providing advisers and staff at the international airport in Kabul and by preparing a transition plan for the airport. The aim of the plan is to train local staff and to provide sufficient facilities for an international standard of aviation at the airport.

Iceland has also participated in provincial reconstruction in Ghor province, the poorest area of Afghanistan, where an observation team and a development officer are situated. Recently, experts from Iceland held a two-week course for midwives and traditional birth assistants in the area, as the mortality rate for mothers and children is still very high in Afghanistan. I am also pleased to announce that Iceland will be making a contribution to the United Nations Development Programme's Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan.

Finally, the necessary work of nation-building and reconstruction in Afghanistan continues. The long list of sponsors of the draft resolution before us is a testament to the commitment and solidarity of the international community with regard to the Afghan Government and its people. Iceland will continue to be committed to making its contribution to establishing security in Afghanistan and to the country's reconstruction.

Mr. Al-Nuaimi (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/326), which refers in detail to the efforts undertaken by the United Nations and its personnel to implement the humanitarian missions entrusted to them by General Assembly resolutions 60/32 A and B and Security Council resolution 1662 (2006). We also commend the efforts of Mr. Tom Koenigs, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, aimed at reconstruction and restoring security and stability in the country, as well as the efforts of the Security Council in supporting the Afghan Government and confronting the difficulties that it is facing . The Council recently sent a mission to Afghanistan to assess progress in the areas of counter-narcotics, disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating illegal armed groups, strengthening and improving the public sector and the judiciary, promoting human rights and the rule of law and stabilizing the country following a period of confrontation with Taliban fighters.

Successive wars over more than 20 years have had a severe impact on all aspects of life in Afghanistan, causing significant loss of human life and destruction of the infrastructures of water, electricity, transport, communications, education and health services and systems; it has also led to the collapse of the financial and banking systems and the deterioration of agricultural infrastructure. All of that has caused severe problems in basic food resources for the population.

Therefore, all reconstruction programmes must be carried out as a top priority in order to help meet the basic needs of the population and to enable refugees and displaced persons to return to their cities and villages. Reconstruction activities will also support efforts to achieve security and stability in Afghanistan in particular and in the region as a whole.

Kuwait emphasizes that it is essential that the members of the international community honour their commitments to assist Afghanistan in addressing and overcoming the challenges confronting it, especially in the area of security, by combating terrorist acts and bringing those responsible for such acts to justice. Kuwait categorically condemns all terrorist attacks committed against Afghanistan. We share the Secretary-General's fears concerning the violent insurgency that is raging in two thirds of the country, which gravely threatens the political transitional period. Therefore, the leadership of the insurgency must be dealt with through severe and firm measures in enforcing the rule of law. It is also essential to strengthen the Government's capacity to provide security and other basic services as well as development guarantees to reduce the population's rising frustration at the slow pace of improvements in their living conditions.

The State of Kuwait welcomes the expansion to the southern part of Afghanistan of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). We urge Member States to continue to increase their support for ISAF so that it can be deployed throughout the country. We support the Afghan Government's counter-narcotics efforts, and we appeal to the international community to support the poppy eradication programme there. We stress that it is essential to undertake more robust measures against poppy farmers and the authorities who protect them, so that a more effective rural agricultural development strategy can be established.

The State of Kuwait has made contributions to reconstruction and to rebuilding the infrastructure's in Afghanistan. The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development has loaned $30 million to fulfil the commitments undertaken by Kuwait at the donor conference held in Tokyo. Of that amount, $15 million has been allocated for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the road from Kandahar to Spin

Boldak, with the other $15 million allocated for the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. The Kuwait Red Crescent Society has donated more than $6.5 million since 2000, and a number of other associations and charities continue to provide assistance.

Finally, we hope that the United Nations will continue to provide assistance to the Afghan Government in order to support peace and stability in Afghanistan. That will have a positive impact on the region and will permit a return to normal life within the international community.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): I wish to begin by extending our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and valuable reports he has presented over the past year on developments in Afghanistan. The efforts and dedication of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Tom Koenigs, as well as their colleagues in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) deserve our profound admiration and support.

Developments in Afghanistan in the past several years have provided ground for optimism. The people and Government of Afghanistan have successfully met all milestones set by the Bonn Agreement. They saw the political transition through to completion last December, when they concluded the general electoral process by inaugurating the Afghan National Assembly. Despite the enormity of the task, the Afghan people, with the help of international and regional assistance and the leadership of President Karzai, made significant progress towards rehabilitating the basic infrastructure needed to support political, economic and social development.

Despite encouraging developments since 2001, various hurdles, in particular the daunting challenges posed by terrorism and a violent insurgency, coupled with a pervasive drug economy, have placed a formidable combination of challenges before the political and economic reconstruction of the country. The trend towards instability, characterized by an upsurge in terrorist activities and violence by the Taliban and Al-Qaida in certain parts of Afghanistan, and the shocking increase in the presence of narcotics, with the insecurity and violence this has generated, are threatening to disrupt the return of the country to peace and stability.

In that respect, the three- to four-fold increase in the rate of casualties this year, as referred to by the Secretary-General in his latest report, is staggering. Likewise, the increasing number of security incidents, particularly the high number of suicide attacks, and their impact on regional developments on Afghanistan are troublesome. The Islamic Republic of Iran condemns the continued terrorist acts committed in Afghanistan and extends its full support to the efforts of the Afghan Government to improve the security situation in the country.

While it is heartening that the rest of the country, including western Afghanistan bordering on Iran, remains secure, we have no doubt that the terrorist activities and insecurity — although limited to a third of the country — pose a grave threat to the political transition nationwide and place the achievements of the Bonn process in jeopardy. Therefore, we agree with the Secretary-General that more efforts on the part of the Afghans and the international community are required to stabilize the country and reverse the path towards further insecurity.

In our view, enhancing the capability of the Afghan police and army constitutes the most effective response to the upsurge in terrorist activities and violence in certain parts of Afghanistan. In that regard, it is imperative that members of the international community spare no efforts in empowering the Afghans to address their own problems by, inter alia, intensifying efforts to improve and accelerate training and equipping the Afghan police and army. If issues such as the poor supply of equipment, weapons, food and accommodation for troops, as referred to by the Secretary-General, are addressed, we believe that the Afghan armed forces will be best placed to deal with the rampant insurgency.

Meanwhile, we believe that in combating terrorism and insecurity in Afghanistan, any actions — including contacts and talks with those responsible for insecurity and mayhem that could be wrongly interpreted as rewarding terrorists and criminals — should be avoided.

We, as a neighbouring country, are extremely concerned over the increase in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. According to findings of the opium survey conducted by the Afghan Ministry of Counter-Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), announced on 3 September 2006,

opium production increased from 180 tons in 2001 and 4,100 in 2005 to 6,100 tons this year. As a result, Afghanistan now accounts for 92 per cent of the total world supply of opium and its derivatives, especially heroin. We also echo the concern expressed in the report of the Secretary-General for the increase in the number of Afghan provinces where the opium poppy is cultivated — from 15 to 20 provinces in the late 1990s to 25 to 30 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces at the present time.

There is no doubt that terrorism, insecurity and drug trafficking in Afghanistan are mutually reinforcing, and terrorist groups are among the major beneficiaries of the drug money. Thus, it is imperative and indispensable for members of the international community, especially those who are at the receiving end of the narcotics trade, to adjust their counter-narcotics strategy accordingly. Equally important is an absolute need for the international community to assist the Afghan Government in implementing its national drug control policy through, inter alia, the building of institutions, elimination of the illicit poppy cultivation, reduction of demand, crop substitution, strengthening law enforcement and promoting alternative livelihoods.

Since the fight against drug trafficking is more effective and less costly along the Afghan borders, the international community should support the efforts made by Afghanistan's neighbouring States and those along the trafficking routes to curb the flow of illicit drugs.

As is well known, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, for its part, fought a costly war against heavily armed drug traffickers in the last decades and stands ready to continue that fight. For Iran to sustain its ongoing fierce fight against drug trafficking, international support, especially the cooperation of neighbouring countries, is indispensable.

Given the enormous challenges that Afghanistan is facing, it is imperative that the international community remain committed in the long term to help the Afghans in their efforts to rehabilitate their country. In that respect, the nationally owned and led Afghan Compact remains the best strategic framework for cooperation between the Government of Afghanistan and the international community. My Government, as a member of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board of the Afghanistan Compact, stands ready to contribute to the success and full realization of that initiative.

My delegation also reaffirms the central role of the United Nations in Afghanistan, including its coordination of efforts to implement the Afghanistan Compact. While commending actions taken by UNAMA, including the opening of new provincial sub-offices despite the heightened security concerns, we welcome the intention of the United Nations to consider expanding UNAMA's activities to as many as seven additional locations across the country. We agree that the expansion sends a strong message to Afghans that the United Nations will continue to help their Government to improve delivery of services, even in parts of the country that are affected by the insurgency.

Given the importance of regional cooperation to help the Afghans cope with the growing insecurity, we look forward with hope to a number of positive steps taken in the past several months with a view to enhancing cooperation between Afghanistan and its neighbours to more rigorously address the insecurity and terrorist threats in the south, south-east and east of Afghanistan. In that context, my Government has always been at the forefront of efforts aimed at supporting regional dialogue to combat terrorism, extremism and drug trafficking, and in fostering cooperation on refugee issues.

We continue to have an enormous stake in the success of the Afghan people and have therefore extended unreserved cooperation to them and their representatives throughout the process. Out of $560 million for reconstruction assistance for Afghanistan pledged by Iran at the Tokyo Conference — which was the highest pledge in terms of per capita income of donor countries — we have thus far spent $270 million on mutually agreed projects in the areas of infrastructure, technical and educational services and other assistance, both financial and in kind.

During his latest visit to Iran, last May, President Karzai of Afghanistan, heading a group of nine cabinet ministers and several provincial governors, conferred with the highest ranking Iranian officials and discussed the expansion of relations in areas of mutual interest. During the visit, seven agreements and memorandums of understanding on exchange of prisoners, extradition of criminals, promotion of investment and construction of the Khwaf-Herat railway, as well as on cooperation

in the cultural, judicial and economic fields, were signed.

Both countries particularly stressed the need for further cooperation in ensuring the voluntary return of Afghan refugees from Iran with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Having hosted almost 3 million Afghan refugees for about three decades, incurring huge costs in the process, the Iranian Government expects more cooperation on the part of the international community and the Afghan Government in the process of the voluntary repatriation of refugees. Despite actions taken in the past several years, that process has not yet made satisfactory progress.

Before concluding, I would like to extend our appreciation to the German delegation for its excellent work in preparing and finalizing draft resolution A/61/L.25.

Mr. Normandin (Canada) *(spoke in French)*: Canada welcomes draft resolution A/61/L.25 on Afghanistan. We were pleased to participate, in a cooperative and collegial spirit, in the preparation of the draft resolution and are pleased to advocate its adoption. Canada also appreciates this opportunity to address the General Assembly on the situation in Afghanistan.

We have joined 36 other nations in a mission authorized by the United Nations and under the command of NATO, in the efforts to stabilize the country. And we are among more than 60 countries contributing to the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Canadian diplomats, representatives of our international development agency, civilian police and 2,500 members of our military forces are on the front lines doing essential work towards the future of Afghanistan. We are the fifth largest bilateral donor, having committed $1 billion over 10 years for the reconstruction and development of the country. We strongly believe that being a responsible global actor means being firmly engaged on the ground.

Since last year, we have witnessed important signs of progress in Afghanistan. January saw the successful conclusion of the Bonn process, included the adoption of Afghanistan's new constitution in 2002 and the holding of nationwide presidential, parliamentary and provincial elections in 2004 and 2005. The Afghan Government and the international community agreed to the Afghanistan Compact, a shared comprehensive, five-year strategy incorporating security, governance and development benchmarks. Moreover, the Afghan Government developed an action plan to meet those benchmarks: the interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Throughout Afghanistan we see major progress in the emergence of the institutions of governance, including the parliament, the Supreme Court and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, providing Afghans with the foundations of statehood. Each of these signs of progress — unthinkable only a few years ago — reflect the will and fortitude of the Afghan people, as well as the firm commitment and determined action of the international community. This progress is encouraging, but it is only the beginning.

We thank the Secretary-General for his most recent report on the situation in Afghanistan (A/61/326), and we welcome his frank and forthright assessment of the emerging security challenges in the country's southern and eastern provinces. As the report of the Secretary-General noted, we have reached a watershed in Afghanistan. The country's successful transition to a peaceful democracy is not yet guaranteed. In order to overcome these growing challenges, the Government of Afghanistan, its regional partners and the rest of the international community must strengthen their collective efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and support its democratic transition.

(*spoke in English*)

We can all do more, and we must all do more. First and foremost, the Government of Afghanistan must lead the way. And it must lead by example. In his recent report, the Secretary-General highlighted Government corruption, particularly within the police and the judiciary, as a primary grievance driving the insurgency. There is no place for corruption within the ranks of Afghanistan's national, provincial or local institutions of governance.

The Afghan people expect — and they deserve — an effective, accountable and transparent Government. They will not support a Government that does not support them. Only good governance can foster the conditions necessary for establishing security, promoting the rule of law, protecting human rights and encouraging economic development. While a great deal

remains to be done, we welcome the Afghan Government's most recent efforts to address corruption, and we stand ready to support their work.

Afghanistan's neighbours also have a critical role to play. Poverty and instability know no borders. High-level regional engagement and cooperation at all levels are crucial to addressing transnational terrorism, the narcotics trade and pressing refugee issues. Canada calls upon States in the region, including Afghanistan's closest neighbours, to step up efforts to prevent the cross-border movement of insurgents, to stem the burgeoning trade in narcotics and to find interim solutions for Afghan refugees living inside their borders. Afghanistan and its neighbours must stand together for the security and prosperity of all.

In that respect, we welcome the second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which took place in New Delhi, India, two weeks ago. Only regional cooperation can build roads and regional arteries linking Afghanistan to regional trade networks. Only regional cooperation can facilitate energy generation and trade across the continent. And only regional cooperation can provide for the exchange of the resources, people and ideas necessary for private sector growth. There is no independent State in the world that can flourish without that degree of cooperation and support.

The international community — Canada included — must also work harder. The United Nations, as the primary representative of the international community responsible for the implementation of the Compact, should remain at the centre of these efforts. Afghanistan is the largest special political mission of the United Nations. The success of the mission is vital for the safety, livelihood and very future of the Afghan people. To that end, we must provide the United Nations — from New York to Kabul, Kandahar and beyond — with the support, capacity and space it requires to show leadership and play its essential coordination role.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia is committed to working with the people and the Government of Afghanistan, as well as the international community, to help build a stable, secure and democratic future for that country. This is no easy task and will need the long-term commitment of the international community. It will also require strong leadership from the Karzai Government.

Australia stresses the importance of reconstruction and development in helping Afghanistan rebuild its destroyed infrastructure and overcome the problems reflected in its sobering social indicators, such as a life expectancy of only 46 years and an appalling literacy rate, which is one of the lowest in the world. That is central to winning the support of the long-suffering Afghan population. Again, this will require commitment, resourcefulness and staying power on the part of the international community. Leadership by the Government of Afghanistan will also be essential.

Counter-narcotics is central to the international community's enterprise in Afghanistan, and we call for effective international and domestic action to combat the recent increase in the cultivation and production of and the traffic in narcotic drugs, as outlined in the 2006 Afghanistan opium survey of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

We stress the importance of institution-building in Afghanistan, including security sector reform and capacity-building within the security sector. Civil society and the institutions of good governance must also be strengthened. These are core requirements for long-term stability in Afghanistan and relate to areas in which the international community can usefully apply lessons learned elsewhere.

Another critical factor in securing peace in Afghanistan is the role of Afghanistan's neighbours, including in combating the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist elements. We call on all States in Afghanistan's region to cooperate with the Government in Kabul and the rest of the international community in building a strong, united and democratic Afghanistan.

These are substantial challenges which demand the continuation of the close cooperation demonstrated by the international community since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, through the Bonn Agreement and, more recently, the adoption of the Afghanistan Compact of 2006. Despite the challenges, Afghanistan is an outstanding example of broad-based cooperation among the international community aimed at promoting peace and security. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) consists of some 32,000 troops from 37 countries. The United Nations, of course, has also been heavily involved in Afghanistan, pursuant to Security Council resolution 1386 (2001) and subsequent resolutions, and the

commitment of those on the ground is particularly commended.

Australia is contributing to the international military effort in Afghanistan. We have deployed a reconstruction task force of about 370 troops as part of a Netherlands-led provincial reconstruction team to Oruzgan province for two years under ISAF.

We have two Chinook helicopters, supporting a further 110 troops, providing much needed aeromedical evacuation, air mobility and logistical support to ISAF. We have contributed special forces to coalition military operations in Afghanistan on two separate occasions since 2001. We have fully disbursed our 2001 aid commitment of $110 million. At the London Conference in 2006, Australia further committed $55 million in development assistance to Afghanistan through June 2007 as part of an indicative $150 million in development assistance over the next five years. We also recently opened the first Australian Embassy in Kabul.

The people of Afghanistan are working to achieve stability, peace and democracy after many years of violence, extremism and devastation. The path ahead will be long and challenging. But the people of Afghanistan will not have to face those challenges alone. Australia, along with many others in the international community, recognizes that by working to build security and an economic future for Afghanistan, we are not only demonstrating solidarity with the Afghan people but also advancing our own peace and security.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): My delegation appreciates the common efforts of the Afghan Government and the international community to achieve peace and development in Afghanistan. Indeed, after the successful completion of the Bonn process last year, Afghanistan has been making steady progress towards peace and reconstruction.

My delegation welcomes all positive developments in that direction. The Afghan National Assembly and provincial councils have begun to function properly. The reform of the security sector is also well under way. The reintegration process for ex-combatants has been completed, while a programme has been launched to disband illegal armed groups. The Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy was formulated to set out development priorities, and the Counter Narcotics Trust Fund has become operational. Furthermore, in London earlier this year, the strong international partnership for Afghanistan was reaffirmed by the Afghanistan Compact, through which the international community will continue to support Afghanistan for the next five years and beyond.

Nevertheless, despite those achievements and renewed commitments, Afghanistan is still faced with a number of challenges that must be overcome. Among those challenges, I would like to elaborate on those that we believe deserve the highest priority and the most urgent and decisive response.

First, we note with deep concern the deteriorating security situation in the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan. Indeed, this provincial insecurity not only threatens national security overall, but also has a serious impact on the prospects for national development, as well as on the human rights situation. In this regard, we welcome the recent expansion of the presence of the International Security Assistance Force into southern and eastern Afghanistan.

In order to deal with this insecurity, the programme to disband illegal armed groups must be accelerated. At the same time, the Afghan national army and police forces must be strengthened, particularly in terms of their equipment and operational capabilities. Another important factor will be enhanced cooperation and coordination between the central and provincial governments, so that law enforcement at the local level will be more effective.

A second issue with far-reaching effects throughout Afghanistan concerns the narcotics industry. My delegation welcomes the continuing counter-narcotics efforts of the Afghan Government and its achievements so far. Nevertheless, after a significant decrease in opium cultivation last year, we have seen a new increase this year. We call on the Afghan Government, in cooperation with the international community and particularly with its neighbours, to strengthen its narcotics eradication programme. At the same time, rural development projects are needed so that people living in rural areas will have viable economic alternatives to cultivating opium for survival.

Thirdly, public administration reform will be a driving force in implementing the Afghanistan Compact and other development policies. Our own development experience taught us that government policies are more effective when strong government

leadership is combined with active community participation. More effective, accountable and transparent public administration, including within the justice sector, will not only reduce corruption, but will also encourage democratic governance, thus facilitating people's participation in government policies.

The Republic of Korea has actively joined in global efforts to support Afghanistan. Since 2002, we have continued to provide military personnel to support reconstruction and stability in Afghanistan. Furthermore, building upon our contribution of approximately $60 million over the past four years, the Republic of Korea is planning to support the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact by earmarking an additional $20 million dollars for the next three years. The new fund will focus on human resources development, public administration, agriculture and rural development. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution on Afghanistan before us, the Republic of Korea once again pledges to renew our unwavering support for the people of Afghanistan in their pursuit of a peaceful and prosperous future.

Mr. Oegroseno (Indonesia): We thank the Secretary-General for presenting his comprehensive report on the crucial topic of "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for peace and security" (A/61/326). Indeed, what happens in Afghanistan has grave consequences not only for its people but also for the region and the world.

While the Government of Afghanistan should try its utmost to consolidate the country's position, it is also a real test for the international community, in owning up to its responsibility for Afghanistan. There will always be a myriad of important international issues, but none should detract from the attention that Afghanistan deserves. It is incumbent upon the concerned States and the relevant international organizations to fully implement their commitments in assisting the Government of Afghanistan to tackle the many substantial security and developmental challenges confronting its people.

Indonesia is deeply disturbed by the upsurge of violence throughout Afghanistan, particularly in the southern and eastern part of the country. The deterioration of the security situation, including the proliferation of suicide bombings and the resurgence of Taliban and foreign fighters, is hampering the reconstruction work.

It is important to continue to institute robust military and law enforcement measures in that regard. However, it is hard to see that the use of force per se would lessen the threat of insecurity and attacks against the Government and the people. If I may quote from paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report, "The foot soldiers of the insurgency ... are driven by poverty, poor education and general disenchantment with their place in society."

The paramount task of integrating various groups in the Afghan society should continue through concrete steps in social and economic development. Greater emphasis on national reconciliation is also important, with ongoing governmental initiatives such as the "Strengthening Peace" programme.

It is sad to realize that 2.5 million Afghanis are facing food scarcity due to the severe drought. It is also unfortunate that less than half of the $76 million joint Government-United Nations appeal launched on 25 July this year has been funded. We must open our coffers so people will not lose their lives. In the long term, only a comprehensive approach, with socio-economic development as its cornerstone, will lead to the improvement of conditions for the Afghan people.

A major negative factor remaining for the society is narcotics. We are deeply concerned that opium cultivation has increased by 59 per cent this year, which is higher than under the previous Government. While the governmental anti-narcotics crackdown is necessary, a law enforcement approach cannot solve the issue by itself. People need alternative and sustainable income-generating activities with the provision of a critical mass of infrastructure that will facilitate economic progress.

The international community must increase its support for the effective implementation of the Afghanistan Compact and the interim National Development Strategy with the full ownership of the Government. In that context, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board should focus further on implementing plans with a priority on helping to build local capacities in the various State and non-State institutions.

Furthermore, the coordination role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should be strengthened. We welcome the expansion of UNAMA activities into more locations throughout

Afghanistan, in the midst of the difficulties and insecure situation on the ground.

Bilateral and regional cooperation in various areas of nation-building is of the essence. The different initiatives in that respect, such as those of the Tripartite Commission and the high-level regional summits held in Shanghai and Tajikistan earlier this year, as well as the second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan held recently in New Delhi, are positive steps and need to be further strengthened.

My delegation is pleased that the democratization process continues, and that the lower house and upper house are functioning to solidify the democracy. We commend the confirmation process for the justices of the Supreme Court, and we hope that there will be further progress in the requisite capacity-building of the justice system. That would contribute to the further establishment of the rule of law in the country.

It is also critical that international humanitarian law is observed, local culture and customs are respected and utmost care is taken not to harm civilians in the military operations. There has been tangible progress in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process. However, the intensification of the insurgency, unfortunately, is being used by some as a reason to resist DDR. That underscores again how important it is for all entities, both inside and outside Afghanistan, to act in a positive manner to help facilitate the efforts of the Government in providing a sense of security to the public.

Indonesia reiterates its full support to our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. We urge the international community to step up its assistance to the Afghan people and to fully support the Government of Afghanistan in implementing its comprehensive policy with a long-term view.

As we did last year, we are pleased once again to be a sponsor of the draft resolution, as contained in the document A/61/L.25, and hope that it can be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): The deliberations on this agenda item are very timely, especially since Afghanistan is at crossroads as regards its democratic future, security and governance.

As I stated in my briefing on the Security Council mission to Afghanistan that took place recently, the Afghan partnership that began in Bonn in 2001 — and which continued through the Tokyo International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in 2002 and the London Conference in January this year, which agreed on the Afghanistan Compact — is still on track. Over the past several years, Afghanistan has achieved a great deal in developing its democratic institutions and tackling many difficult challenges in its post-conflict nation-building efforts. The United Nations and the rest of the international community have played an indispensable role in the process and in assisting the fledgling Government to deal with problems facing the country.

It is also a harsh reality that Afghanistan continues to face serious challenges in the areas of governance, maintaining security and stability in the countryside and in reconstruction and development efforts. There is fragility in the central and provincial administration. The immediate key problems include the rise and gradual spread of the Taliban-led insurgency and attacks by terrorists and extremists, pernicious illegal drug production and trafficking, weak Government institutions — in particular in the security sector and other civil service areas — lack of rule of law, and corruption. Against such a backdrop, we would like to stress three points that we consider to be of particular importance in moving the international partnership with Afghanistan forward.

The first point is the importance of Afghans fully owing the process themselves. That is increasingly being achieved as it relates to building institutions and resolving problems. In fact, Afghanistan had to start on its reconstruction not from zero but from below zero — from deep minuses following years of conflict and destruction of the country. Against that background, we highly commend the efforts and achievements made so far by the Afghan Government and people. In our view, Afghan ownership has played an essential part in the process thus far. That should be encouraged and strengthened.

In that regard, Japan is of the view that the Afghanistan Compact remains the most appropriate strategic framework for cooperation between the Afghan Government and the international community. Head-on implementation of the Compact is of critical importance now. It is essential that Afghans, who own and lead the Compact, keep their commitment to the Compact in order to address issues such as fighting corruption and impunity, establishing the rule of law and building a culture of respect for human rights,

especially women's rights. The international community, for its part, needs to remain strongly committed to assisting Afghanistan in every way possible, to ensure that the gains made so far and the enormous effort invested will not be wasted. In that connection, we emphasize that the international community should continue to give its full support to the Afghan Compact and its implementation mechanism, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board. Japan very much expects that the Afghan Compact will move from process and planning to action and implementation.

Secondly, we wish to express our concern over the security situation in Afghanistan, which remains precarious throughout the country. That also poses a serious threat to the nation-building process. Various international support efforts are ongoing. For its part, Japan — firmly determined to prevent the country from becoming a hotbed of terrorism and a haven for extremists — has assisted Afghanistan by hosting, as a follow-up to the 2002 International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, a second Tokyo conference in July on the consolidation of peace in Afghanistan. We have also extended official development assistance amounting to approximately $1.1 billion, covering security sector reform — in particular for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and the disbandment of illegal armed groups — as well as comprehensive rural development and human resource development programmes and projects. In addition, Japan decided last month to continue the maritime support activities conducted by Japan's Maritime Self-defence Force ships engaged in counter-terrorism operations in the Indian Ocean.

We stress that the primary responsibility for ensuring security lies with the Afghans themselves. But while there remains an urgent need for outside support in the security sector, the international community should continue to make support available as much as possible.

Thirdly, let me say a word about the importance of regional cooperation. The reconstruction of Afghanistan not only benefits Afghanistan, it also benefits neighbouring countries and the region as a whole. Regional cooperation between Afghanistan and neighbouring countries should therefore be encouraged. Based on that belief, Japan organized at Tokyo last June the second Foreign Ministers meeting of the Central Asia Plus Japan dialogue. Japan invited Afghanistan to participate as a partner in that forum for the first time.

Similarly, Japan has supported the construction of key infrastructure projects to ensure smoother movement of people and goods inside the country. That will in turn contribute to promoting greater regional movement of goods and people between Afghanistan and countries in Central and South Asia, as well as to greater regional cooperation over time. Those projects include the major artery of the ring road and the Kabul International Airport, as well as roads connecting Afghanistan and surrounding countries.

As part of support for counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics measures in Afghanistan, Japan has provided approximately $11.5 million dollars for counter-narcotics measures and for training in customs control. Moreover, Japan intends to actively support training in border control and management between Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

Finally, we wish to express our great appreciation to the delegation of Germany for submitting the draft resolution. As a sponsor of the draft resolution, we strongly support it.

Mr. Siegel (United States of America): The United States would like to express its appreciation for the imminent adoption of draft resolution A/61/L.25, on the situation in Afghanistan. We would like to thank Germany and the other sponsors for their efforts. The adoption of the resolution by consensus will demonstrate the overwhelming support of the international community for our joint endeavour in Afghanistan. The draft resolution is a comprehensive document that will help guide the actions of the international community in Afghanistan.

We appreciate the assistance Member States have given to improve security, democracy, governance and economic and social development in Afghanistan, as well as assistance to counter-narcotics and to support regional stability efforts. Of particular importance, the draft resolution reaffirms the international community's resolve to address the threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaida and other extremist groups at this critical juncture.

The United States is the largest donor, as well as the largest troop contributor, to Afghanistan. We reaffirm our commitment to work with the United

Nations, International Security Assistance Force partners and the Afghan Government towards security, democracy and prosperity in Afghanistan.

Mr. Sen (India): I would like to thank the President for scheduling today's discussion on the situation in Afghanistan. This meeting is a valuable opportunity to discuss a vitally important issue in the most representative organ of the United Nations, the General Assembly. We would also wish to place on record our appreciation for the constructive efforts and meticulous diligence of the German delegation in producing a more compact, concise and user-friendly draft resolution for adoption this year. We are happy to encourage its adoption by consensus.

The importance of today's discussion on Afghanistan stems from the centrality of the partnership between the Afghan people and the international community in ensuring lasting security, long-term employment-led development and humanitarian relief in the country. After all, that is the essence of the International Compact on Afghanistan. In discussing this crucial issue today, we also recognize the interconnected nature of the world's responsibility in Afghanistan, given its location at the strategic crossroads that link West Asia, South Asia, Central Asia and East Asia.

I do not propose to elaborate at length on well-known facts about the situation in Afghanistan, not only because today's draft resolution speaks for itself but also because the report (A/61/326) of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan provides a detailed reflection of the facts on the ground. I would, however, like to draw attention to the recently-concluded second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, which India had the honour to host jointly with our brothers from Afghanistan in New Delhi 10 days ago. Our remarks today will be in keeping with the future-oriented vision that is outlined in the documents that emerged from that important conference.

The first point that I would like to touch upon is that, in our collective efforts to assist the Afghan people in their effort to put the last decades of strife and privation behind them, we need to focus on some of the positive achievements of the past few years. It is almost five years since the Taliban regime was removed from power. We must recognize that, in that brief period, the pace of democratic change in Afghanistan has, by any standard, been remarkable. Today most of the accepted milestones of modern democracy are visible in Afghanistan. The report of a well-known think tank has correctly concluded that, if handled rightly, the National Assembly has the potential to play a vital role in stabilizing Afghanistan, entrenching pluralism, institutionalizing political competition and giving voice to the country's diverse population.

Those landmark achievements have been attained in the face of adversity and despite serious challenges. That is not to deny the need for further efforts, or to suggest that we may now indulge in the luxury of complacency — far from it. We recognize, as does today's draft resolution, the need for further efforts to give representation to all segments of Afghan society, including women. However, we would like to pay tribute to the courage and perseverance of the people and the foresight of the leadership of Afghanistan for their achievements so far. Equally, we commend the Afghan people for determinedly pursuing the complex task of building a modern State on the shattered fragments of decades of war and strife.

Secondly, and crucially, we believe that much more needs to be done to reverse the deteriorating security situation. This urgency is reflected both in the Secretary-General's report and in today's draft resolution. But language alone cannot capture the criticality of this effort. While we commend the efforts made thus far, intensified regional and international efforts to deal with the problem of a resurgent Taliban, an Al-Qaida insurrection and their nexus with drug traffickers is essential. Sadly, all of us know of this only too well, from the attacks on security forces to the tragic killing of humanitarian workers. The cost of tolerating such an insurrection is infinitely higher for each and every one of us than any costs we might collectively bear in putting it down firmly and finally.

Making deals with the Taliban will bring neither peace nor security. The people support democratization. A long-term solution to the problems of the Afghan people is therefore to be found in a judicious mixture of using force against extremist elements and providing credible and sustained development opportunities to build upon the growing constituency for peace and development, not only in Afghanistan but across the region.

Inaugurating the second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh described the violence in southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, which undermines the security of Afghanistan and the development effort, as a challenge that is a collective responsibility. The swamp of terrorist insurgency cannot be drained until the stream feeding the swamp dries up, or is at least reduced to a trickle. An important regional and international duty that devolves upon all of us is to act firmly and decisively to eliminate the agencies of terror and their backers, prevent incitement to terror and interdict the sources that provide terrorist groups with arms and finances. That, I might add, is a responsibility that we have all undertaken to bear, not only in the World Summit Outcome Document but also in the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted at the previous General Assembly session.

I would also like to point out that the New Delhi declaration of the second Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan notes that a

> "strategy for development for Afghanistan which is based on cooperation with regional countries creates significant possibilities for reducing poverty and for achieving the Afghanistan Compact benchmarks and Millennium Development Goals in the entire region".

Towards that end, it outlines a number of useful suggestions for the countries of the region to coordinate policies for exploiting shared resources such as water, agriculture and energy, to develop capacity-building programmes, to expand trade and transport linkages, to design and build appropriate and practical regional projects and even to develop policies to counter the cultivation of narcotics and drug smuggling.

The Asian Development Bank has already been asked to undertake a study on regional integration strategies, and will share key findings at the next Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan. The second Conference also led to decisions from participating regional States to put in place a number of practical programmes that would give substance to the regional process of assisting Afghanistan, apart from giving that objective a higher level of the necessary political commitment. In such measures lie the key to unlocking the vast latent potential of the land and people of Afghanistan.

India's support for a sovereign, stable, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan is consistent and well-known. We see a resurgent, stable, sovereign and peaceful Afghanistan as an essential element in the growing webs of regional cooperation that are binding our world, but also a process that reclaims for the people of Afghanistan their rightful place in our collective future. Afghanistan's entry into the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, at its last summit in Dhaka, was a manifestation of that process. We believe that Afghanistan can, and must be, provided with the means to re-establish itself as the crossroads of Asia and as one of the future transport hubs and energy bridges of our region.

In conclusion, let me also reiterate India's own unwavering commitment to assist with the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We have extended financial assistance totalling over $600 million to fund infrastructure projects and to strengthen the national budget process. Our involvement in project assistance spans the gamut of activity from basic infrastructure such as roads, power generation, dams and telecommunications systems to community-based small-scale projects, which have a short gestation period and provide a direct, rapid and visible impact on community life.

However, we also realize the need to transcend funding, and have been working to provide the Afghan people with the tools to help themselves through training programmes and appropriate technologies, both in India and in Afghanistan. Tragic and heinous attacks on our nationals involved in humanitarian assistance programmes will not deter us from that effort. The Prime Minister of India said in New Delhi last week that India would do whatever it was called upon to do to strengthen democracy and promote development in Afghanistan. Prime Minister Singh described that as a solemn commitment to a neighbour, to a trusted friend, to a great people. India remains firmly committed to helping the Afghan people rebuild their nation and create new opportunities for the future.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey): Turkey aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. However, given Turkey's special ties with Afghanistan, I want to make a few additional remarks in order to reaffirm our

support for the ongoing reconstruction process in that country.

It has been more than four years since we turned a new page in Afghanistan. The progress achieved to date is truly substantial. What has been accomplished by the Afghan people is indeed commendable. However, there are still major challenges ahead. We should therefore continue to act with full resolve to contribute to the creation of a democratic, secure and stable Afghanistan.

In that regard, the draft resolution before us strikes a good balance between what has been achieved and what still remains to be done in Afghanistan. We thank Germany for facilitating the preparation of the draft resolution, which contains all the elements of a check-list that can guide us towards our ultimate goal. Given their interlinked nature, we can only achieve all those objectives through a comprehensive process. In that context, we fully support the Compact process, which was initiated less than a year ago along these lines. It has already started yielding results. We remain committed to its successful completion.

In that regard, the year ahead of us is critical if we are to be able to make good on our commitments. Not only do we have to consolidate the initial successes of the Compact process and extend it country-wide, but we should also stand firmly against the re-emerging forces of darkness and instability that try to hold back Afghanistan from its march towards progress and prosperity. In particular, the increase in drug trafficking and the worsening of the security situation in the south and east of the country require our immediate and resolute attention and action.

I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate that Turkey will continue to play a supportive role vis-à-vis the people of Afghanistan. We believe in their great potential, and feel that they deserve the full support of all of us in their endeavour to carry Afghanistan forward. That is why, after leading the International Security Assistance Force twice in the last three years, we still maintain a large contingent in the country as part of NATO forces. We have also recently launched, and assumed full responsibility for, a provincial reconstruction team in Vardak province, north of Kabul.

In conclusion, we will continue to assist our Afghan brethren in every way we can. We are therefore pleased to be one of the sponsors of today's draft resolution, which is precisely designed for that purpose.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): New Zealand is pleased to be a sponsor of this year's draft resolution on the situation in Afghanistan.

Let me begin by congratulating the Government and people of Afghanistan on the important steps that have been taken in recent years, including elections for the presidency and the National Assembly and the inauguration of vital democratic institutions. Those are rightly heralded as major achievements on Afghanistan's path towards stable democracy since the signing of the Bonn Agreement. We acknowledge in particular the work of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, which was recognized at Bonn as an institution critical to the promotion and protection of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Afghan people.

Security and economic development, evidenced by an improvement in the quality of daily life for the Afghan people, is the key to securing the legitimacy and authority of the Afghan Government and the basis for long-term peace and stability. There is encouraging evidence of gains leading to a revival of economic activity, in particular in those parts of Afghanistan that have seen improvements in stability and governance. In that context, New Zealand acknowledges the value of local mechanisms in achieving regional solutions, and the investment of effort and commitment by Afghan people, often under difficult and trying circumstances, in making those initiatives work.

But the deterioration of the overall security environment, which impinges on the delivery of aid and on economic growth, is of real concern. The upsurge in violence, coupled with a major resurgence of Taliban military and terrorist activity, in particular in southern Afghanistan, is at an unprecedented level. New Zealand, as a contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, commends the Government of Afghanistan and the major ISAF contributors for their efforts towards achieving stability and security throughout Afghanistan. We add our voice to calls on the Government of Afghanistan and international partners to remain committed to developing the capabilities of the Afghan police and military.

The unprecedented increase in opium production and illegal trafficking, which have negative effects on

stabilization initiatives, governance and the rooting out of corruption, is of further concern. It is vital that efforts to address the problem, including through the development of alternative rural livelihoods and justice sector reform, are redoubled.

New Zealand will continue to support the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan in assisting with the restoration of peace and security. We maintain our commitment to reconstruction initiatives in Bamyan. We call on international donors to ensure that their contributions are closely coordinated with those of other donors, and in accordance with the Interim Afghan National Development Strategy and the Afghanistan Compact.

New Zealand recognizes that the road to success for Afghanistan is a long one. Alongside others here today, we reaffirm New Zealand's commitment to continuing to work with the Afghan people to create a safe, secure and more prosperous country.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): Norway believes that the situation in Afghanistan is a cause for deep concern. The conflict in the southern parts of the country has demonstrated the need for a change of pace in our efforts — those of the international community and those of the Government of Afghanistan. The increasing challenges have illustrated the importance of making better use of our resources in some areas, of expanding our efforts in others and of enhancing the ability of the Afghan Government to assume ownership of the development of its own country.

A comprehensive and truly nation-wide strategy is required. If we remain focused on one dimension of our work alone or on one region of the country, then the result may well be less stability, not more. Our strategy must include the security, humanitarian, development and political dimensions. The Bonn process brought about impressive achievements, and the Afghanistan Compact remains our road map. However, there is today a sense of stagnation.

In order to inject new and much needed political energy into the process, it is our view that we must address three interrelated challenges: first, improving the coordination of international assistance; secondly, enhancing our capacity-building efforts; and, thirdly, supporting President Karzai by encouraging the Afghan Government to strengthen its outreach policies and to rid itself of corruption and undesirable practices. Our work is a true partnership between the international community and the Government of Afghanistan. Their leadership and ownership are crucial.

Let me turn to the first point, namely, improving the coordination of international assistance. Although improvements have been made, the civilian side of the international community continues to suffer from a lack of coordination. The fragmentation of our civilian efforts leads to a waste of resources. It complicates our efforts to implement a systematic development strategy under the leadership of the Government of Afghanistan. We need stronger civilian leadership in order to improve the coordination of our assistance and enhance the ability of the Afghan Government to assume ownership. That would enable us to speed up the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact.

No other organization is better placed to shoulder that responsibility than the United Nations. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) should be staffed and given the resources required to play that role on the ground. There is also a need to strengthen coordination between capitals and the headquarters of key organizations. To facilitate such coordination, the United Nations may consider the appointment of a special envoy for Afghanistan with the task of conducting a continuous dialogue with countries engaged in the stabilization of Afghanistan, with countries in the region and with relevant international organizations.

However, efficient coordination will be possible only if donors are prepared to be coordinated. While reliance on foreign contractors and personnel may often be inevitable, it also drives up costs, leaves less money in Afghanistan and leads to parallel structures, thereby weakening Afghan ownership and its ability to develop its own institutions. We should examine how we can channel more of our development and reconstruction assistance through Afghan institutions and organizations, in accordance with the Afghanistan Compact.

To the second point — that is, improving Afghan governance and ownership — it is our view that capacity-building remains a key to success in Afghanistan. Significant resources have been invested in the training of staff of Government institutions, the police, the judiciary and the army. Nevertheless, the instruments of law and order remain weak, ministries and provincial authorities urgently need expertise and the army lacks the capacity to conduct independent

operations. A stronger, more concerted capacity-building effort is required.

Capacity-building is also an important part of development and reconstruction. The donor community should do more to increase their use of Afghan personnel, thereby providing a capacity-building effect, which would facilitate the maintenance and sustainability of projects. The use of local manpower would stimulate economic growth and employment as well as local ownership.

Thirdly, with regard to supporting the Afghan Government, an intensified international programme to promote ownership and capacity-building must be accompanied by a determined effort by the Government of Afghanistan to reach out to its people and improve its own institutions. The Government should be encouraged to reach out to provinces, districts and villages. An intensified dialogue between the central Government and local leaders and tribal elders would be an essential means of forging loyalty between the central Government and the different parts of the country. The building of a stable Afghanistan will need to combine new institutions with traditional structures.

Let me add our concerns regarding the humanitarian situation. There are pressing humanitarian needs in Afghanistan today. Soon, 1.9 million Afghans may require food assistance due to large-scale drought. Furthermore, 20,000 displaced families are in need of food and shelter, following the fighting in the southern provinces. A prompt response to the recent appeal by the Government and UNAMA is required. We must enable the Government to exercise leadership, and thereby demonstrate its ability to come to the assistance of its own people.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 16.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/61/L.25.

I should like to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors: Cameroon, Cape Verde, Cyprus, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jordan, Kuwait, Liberia, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, San Marino, Sri Lanka, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia and Turkmenistan.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.25?

Draft resolution A/61/L.25 was adopted (resolution 61/18).

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 16?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.